

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 04048 070610Z

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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ITFE-05 SR-02 ORM-01 VO-03 SCA-01 IO-10 /083 W

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P R 061123Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4266

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMCONSUL UDORN

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MANILA FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB

E.O 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: PRESS TREATMENT OF LAO REFUGEE QUESTION

REF: STATE 132175 (NOTAL)

1. LEWIS SIMONS OF WASHINGTON POST JUNE 6 REQUESTED BACKGROUND SESSION ON QUESTION OF LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND; AFTER PUBLICATION OF ANDELMAN ARTICLE IN NY TIMES JUNE 5 (REFTEL), HIS EDITORS HAD ASKED HIM TO FILE ON SUBJECT. SINCE WE WERE ALSO DISTURBED BY TONE AND IMPLICATIONS OF ANDELMAN ARTICLE, AT LEAST AS EXCERPTED IN JUNE 5 WIRELESS FILE, WE READILY AGREED AND POL COUNSELOR WENT OVER WHOLE SUBJECT, FOLLOWING MAIN POINTS OF DEPARTMENT'S UNUSED GUIDANCE (REFTEL).

2. POL COUNSELOR ALSO STRESSED: RECENT GENESIS OF PROBLEM; VAST DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SITUATION HERE AND THOSE IN PHNOM PENH AND SAIGON; VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF PERSONS WHO HAVE APPLIED AT UDORN FOR ASYLUM IN OR ENTRY TO
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PAGE 02 VIENTI 04048 070610Z

U.S., AND DIFFERENT DEGREES OF U.S.G. ASSOCIATION WITH

VARIOUS LAO WHO WERE NOT OUR EMPLOYEES; AND INACCURACY OF ANCELMAN'S ASSERTION THAT LAO WERE BEING "TURNED AWAY." HE NOTED THAT AT UDORN NAMES OF LAO REFUGEES WERE BEING RECORDED; THEIR APPLICATIONS FORWARDED TO WASHINGTON; AND WERE BEING ADVISED TO KEEP IN TOUCH -- IN OTHER WORDS, SYMPATHETIC TREATMENT. HE ALSO SOUGHT TO CORRECT ANDELMAN'S MISLEADING STATEMENT THAT "HUNDREDS OF OTHER LAOTIANS HOLDING SOUTH VIETNAMESE OR CAMBODIAN PASSPORTS" HAVE BEEN GRANTED REFUGEE STATUS BY MAKING CLEAR THAT SUCH PERSONS WERE ETHNICALLY, AS WELL AS DOCUMENTARILY, VIETNAMESE OR KHMER AND NOT RPT NOT LAO. HE DENIED THAT ANY "CONSULAR OFFICIAL" HERE (OR, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, IN UDORN) HAD DESCRIBED SITUATION AS A "SCANDAL."

3. SIMONS WAS ALSO FURNISHED BASIC INFORMATION ON PAROLE CONCEPT AS APPLIED TO VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIANS AND WAS GIVEN FOLLOWING VIETIANE CONSULAR STATISTICS FOR MONTH OF MAY 1975: 46 IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED, OF WHICH ABOUT TEN, OR IN ANY EVENT NO MORE THAN 25 PERCENT, WERE TO LAO AND REMAINDER TO CHINESE, VIETNAMESE, FILIPINOS, INDIANS, ETC.; AND 66 NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS ISSUED, MORE THAN HALF OF THEM TO LAO. POL COUNSELOR NOTED THAT THESE FIGURES REPRESENTED SLIGHT INCREASE OVER AVERAGES FOR RECENT MONTHS. IT WAS ALSO SPECIFIED THAT ROUND NUMBERS FOR LAO SEEKING ENTRY OR ASYLUM (100 PRINCIPALS, 500 TOTAL) DID NOT RPT NOT INCLUDE MEO NOW IN THAILAND.

4. SIMONS SEEMED PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN WHAT HE TOOK TO BE IMPLICATION OF ANDELMAN'S ARTICLE THAT USG WAS DECLINING RESPONSIBILITY FOR LAO (INCLUDING USG EMPLOYEES) AND TRYING TO PASS OFF THE SITUATION AS A THAI PROBLEM. POL COUNSELOR SOUGHT TO COUNTER THIS IDEA, SAYING THAT USG RECOGNIZED ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TO ITS FORMER EMPLOYEES AND TO OTHER LAO WHO HAVE COOPERATED CLOSELY WITH US BUT AT SAME TIME DOES NOT HAVE IMMEDIATE LEGAL SOLUTION TO THEIR PREDICAMENT AND IS OBLIGED TO INSIST THAT THEY ATTEMPT TO STAY IN COUNTRY OF FIRST ASYLUM AND SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES AND FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGNIZATIONS. HE SAID THERE IS NO ATTEMPT BY USG TO DUMP PROBLEM ON THE THAI; WE HAVE NOT ENCOURAGED THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 VIENTI 04048 070610Z

REFUGEE MOVEMENT, AND WE RECOGNIZE THAT PRESENCE OF LAO REFUGEES COULD (AS ANDELMAN ARTICLE STATES) BECOME A FACTOR IN THAI-LAO RELATIONS. HE NOTED ALSO POSSIBLE HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS AS LAO REFUGEES DRAW DOWN THEIR FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND IF RTG SHOULD ATTEMPT TO ENFORCE LIMITS ON THEIR STAY IN THAILAND BEFORE REFUGEES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE ONWARD TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS.

5. SIMONS (WHOM WE CONSIDER INTELLIGENT AND RESPONSIBLE)
SEEMD TO ABSORB ALL THIS AND WONDERED ALOUD WHETHER HE
COULD WRITE A STORY THAT WOULD AMOUNT TO ANYTHING MORE THAN
A REBUTTAL OF ANDELMAN'S. HE SAID HE WOULD PROBABLY FILE
SOMETHING, HOWEVER. SIMONS OFFERED OBSERVATION THAT HIS
EDITORS, AND PROBABLY USG OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON AS WELL,
WERE CONDITIONED BY SAIGON AND PHNOM PENH EXPERIENCES;
EDITORS EXPECTED LAOS TO PRODUCE STORIES ABOUT DESERVING
HOST-COUNTRY NATIONALS ALLEGEDLY LEFT BEHIND AND UNDESERVING
ONES EVACUATED -- IN SHORT, SOMETHING ON HIGH DRAMATIC
ORDER OF EAGLE PULL AND TALON VISE.
CHAPMAN

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